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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 1058: AN ACT CONCERNING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

March 10, 2015

This testimony is submitted in favor of raised bill no. 1058. This act will enforce school districts to be more accountable in addressing chronic absenteeism: The collection of Chronic Absenteeism data and proper usage of this data can and will be a major tool in aiding the improvements of our students who do not receive early interventions and are more likely not to be reading proficiently by the end of third grade. They are more likely to fail classes, drop out of school and become involved in the juvenile and ultimately The Adult Judicial System.

My name is Joseph Vaverchak, District Supervisor of Attendance/Residency/Registration and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison for the Consolidated School District of New Britain, CT. I'm writing this testimony in support of raised Bill 1058: An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism. I have worked with attendance issues in our district since 1996. I have been a member of numerous attendance committees/task forces since 1998 beginning with the State of Connecticut Task Force followed by the Governor's Prevention Program on Truancy. At this time I am grateful to be co-chairing The Connecticut Kids Report Card Strategic Action Group on Chronic Absenteeism focusing on Best Practices.

Average Daily Attendance is clearly a mask for the real problem of Chronic Absenteeism. An example of this is a school with 96% average daily attendance but a second grade in that school that has a chronic absenteeism rate of 25%. Definition of Chronic Absenteeism is missing 10% or more of school, excused or unexcused absences. By identifying and addressing the Chronic Absenteeism piece, you can now isolate on those particular students and put in place initiatives and interventions needed to meet the needs of these students and promote academic success.

School Attendance Review Teams, or existing attendance teams need to be part of all school districts. To be consistent in sustaining success, these teams need to meet on a weekly / bi-weekly basis. These meetings need not to be more than 30 minutes in duration. School Attendance Review Teams can involve stakeholders from different parts of education within their buildings. E.g. School Principal, Assistant Principal, School Social Worker, School Psychologist, Dean of Students, Guidance Counselor, Teacher, Nurse, School Secretary; who work collaboratively with the ultimate goal of decreasing Chronic Absenteeism and guiding students to educational success. The engagement of parents and staff is an integral intervention in obtaining success for all students.

In conclusion, I am in strong support of Bill 1058: An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism. Attendance Teams and analyzing accurate attendance data will ultimately strengthen positive school attendance and student achievement.

Respectfully Submitted,

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